BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

# INFORMATION BULLETIN

For Immediate Release
2007AG0021-000526
April 26, 2007

Ministry of Attorney General
and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism

## GOVERNMENT INTRODUCES MISCELLANEOUS STATUTES AMENDMENT

VICTORIA – Bill 35, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2007, introduced today, affects the following provincial statutes:

- **British Columbia Wine Act** – The British Columbia Wine Act is being repealed to support the wine industry's new approach to governance and the administration of wine quality standards. The B.C. Wine Institute has refocused its work on promoting and marketing B.C.'s wines and wine quality. The B.C. Wine Authority now regulates wine quality standards, while the B.C. Wine Grape Council regulates wine and grape research.

  This amendment will help develop and implement sustainable, long-term solutions over the content and enforcement of standards for B.C. wine to ensure the ongoing success of the industry. It will make British Columbia wine promotion the sole focus of the B.C. Wine Institute, which will be reconstituted as a private society under the Society Act. The amendments eliminate redundant regulatory requirements and ensure essential regulatory requirements are clearly connected to the administering agency, the B.C. Wine Authority.

- **Community Charter, Vancouver Charter** – To enhance public accountability, municipalities will now develop and disclose municipal policies in relation to revenue sources, distribution of property value taxes and use of permissive tax exemptions. Municipalities will have broader authority to provide revitalization tax exemptions for the economic, social and environmental well-being of their communities. This legislation provides parallel amendments for the City of Vancouver under the Vancouver Charter.

- **Farm Practices Protection Act** – An amendment to the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act will allow decisions made by the British Columbia Farm Industry Review Board to be enforced like court orders. This amendment will ensure the act continues to provide a balanced, effective process to resolve complaints about farm practices; provide sections of the Administrative Tribunals Act related to enforcement of orders to the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act, a key element of the Province's strengthening farming program; and provide a balanced approach to resolving concerns about farming for the increasing number of British Columbians who live near farm operations. It will allow farm practice complainants to file the board's decision with the court and take action to have board decisions enforced as a court order. The amendment makes the act consistent with the objectives of British Columbia's agriculture plan, intended to ensure measures are in place for a successful agriculture sector.

- **Land Act** – Amendments to the Land Act will allow for an integrated land and resource registry. The registry will give government and external clients efficient, single-window access to information on legal rights and interests on Crown land in B.C., 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Once operating, the registry will reduce adjudication times and increase certainty for decision making on land use.

- **Land Title Act** – Amendments to the Land Title Act will create new opportunities for farmers by ensuring they can enter into valid, enforceable, long-term leases for unused portions of agricultural lands. The amendment addresses side effects of a 1996 judicial case that interpreted the act's requirements on leases on unsubdivided land. The case has resulted in confusion, extra costs for farmers and an unintended burden on local governments. The amendments will enhance farmers' ability to affordably access unused farmland and set out requirements for leases with terms exceeding three years. The changes will promote certainty for land agreements and reduce unnecessary litigation.

- **Land Title Act and Land Title and Survey Authority Act** – Minor housekeeping amendments to the two acts will provide ongoing support for the operations of the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia. The amendments will clarify services provided to customers in exchange for fees. They will reallocate two existing customer fees between the Province and the authority to ensure timely and accurate services. Amendments finalize the orderly transition of the land title and survey systems from the Province to the Land Title and Survey Authority and remove a reference to the Forest Land Reserves for titles, as this is no longer necessary. They will also prevent an outgoing director from voting on their replacement.

- **Motor Vehicle Act and Insurance (Vehicle) Act** – Amendments to these acts bring B.C. in line with other North American jurisdictions with respect to vicarious liability and help keep key businesses like car rental companies in the province to support major industries such as tourism. Currently, car rental and lease companies face unlimited liability for accidents and damages caused by their customers. Changes will limit companies' liability to $1 million for bodily injury and property damage claims and shift some of the responsibility to the driver.

- **Passenger Transportation Act** – A proposed minor amendment to the Passenger Transportation Act will support the act's enforcement. The act regulates taxis, limousines and intercity buses to ensure adequate access to commercial public transportation and public safety. Currently, operating licences are approved by the Passenger Transportation Board and a common condition restricts the area in which a licensee may pick up passengers. The amendment will add a new offence to enable a fine to be levied against drivers who operate outside of their boundary. Currently, only licensees can be fined.

- **The Wildlife Act** – Amendments will allow the board of directors for the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF) to convert the organization to an independent legal entity registered as a society under the Societies Act. Rules regarding the board and its business operations will be moved from the Wildlife Act to the new society's constitution and bylaws.

-30-

**MINISTRY CONTACT LIST:**

**British Columbia Wine Act, Farm Practices Protection Act, Land Act, Land Title Act, Land Title and Survey Authority Act:**
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Jessica Woodburn
250 356-1674

**Community Charter:**
Ministry of Community Services
Anne McKinnon
250 953 -3677

**Motor Vehicle Act and Insurance (Vehicle) Act:**
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Cindy Rose
250 356-6961

**Passenger Transportation Act:**
Ministry of Transportation
Jeff Knight
250 356-7707

**Wildlife Act:**
Ministry of Environment
Kate Thompson
250 953-4577

For more information on government services or to subscribe to the Province's news feeds using RSS, visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca.